

Vol. I — No. 7

The Pathfinder

JANUARY, 1907

Old Authors to Read

II.—FRANÇOIS VILLON

By FRANK WALLER ALLEN

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
OF SEWANEE TENNESSEE
FIFTY CENTS A YEAR · TEN CENTS A COPY

Entered at the post-office at Sewanee as second-class matter

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EDWIN WILEY } *Associate Editors*

Contributions are invited from all lovers of good books and high ideals in literature, art and life. The editors disclaim responsibility for the opinions of contributors.

CONTENTS FOR JANUARY

<i>LOVE IS ENOUGH</i>	<i>By Estelle Duclo</i>
<i>OLD AUTHORS TO READ:</i>	
II.— <i>FRANCOIS VILLON</i>	<i>By Frank Waller Allen</i>
<i>MY PHILOSOPHY</i>	<i>By Edwin Carlile Litsey</i>
<i>A BALLAD OF FRANÇOIS VILLON</i>	<i>A Reprint from Swinburne</i>
<i>FLAMINGOES</i>	<i>By Clinton Scollard</i>
<i>THE POETRY OF CLINTON SCOLLARD</i>	<i>By F. J. Dicks</i>
<i>THE BALLAD OF DEAD LADIES</i>	<i>By François Villon</i>
<i>OF STUDIES</i>	<i>A Reprint from Francis Bacon</i>

This journal is published monthly by THE UNIVERSITY PRESS OF SEWANEE TENNESSEE.

The subscription price is Fifty Cents a year, or Seventy-five Cents when sent to a foreign country, and unless otherwise directed subscriptions will begin with the current volume. Single copies are Ten Cents.

All communications, except those of a business character, should be addressed as follows: The Editor of The Pathfinder, Sewanee, Tennessee.

The Pathfinder

A monthly magazine in little devoted
to Art and Literature



GLEN LEVIN SWIGGETT, *Editor*
SARAH BARNWELL ELLIOTT
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EDWIN WILEY

This is planned to be the meeting-place for those who care for the beautiful and permanent things in art and literature; where one may find, selected carefully from the writings of the master-minds of the past, their best thoughts and appreciations of these things; and where the man of to-day, whether scholar, poet, or artist, may give expression to his love for and abiding faith in those personalities, institutions, and things that reflect a serious purpose and lofty ideal.

The journal must needs be brief. It will contain a series of short essays, a connected run of pithy paragraphs, original poems, selections or translations from the great poets or prose writers, and other available matter of a similar character. In the course of the year special numbers will be given to those men and movements that merit such treatment.

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The Pathfinder

Vol. I]

JANUARY, 1907

[No. 7

LOVE IS ENOUGH

By ESTELLE DUCLO

Love is enough! There is naught else to say,
Naught but to *live* the love, dear, day by day,
Suffusing every act, yea, every thought,
With that fine glow from love's rich radiance caught.

"Love is enough," the painter-poet sang,
And thro' his words a magic message rang,
Which our fond souls have quickened to new power—
As one might vivify a fading flower.

Oh, let us follow—tho' the path seem rough—
That road which bears the sign: "Love is enough!"
All other ways are by-ways, barren, long:—
Love is enough—hark! Life becomes a song.

*OLD AUTHORS TO READ**By FRANK WALLER ALLEN**II.—FRANÇOIS VILLON*

It is a wonderfully strange thing, this play of fate with the lives of men. Few of us have the good fortune to be asked how we would plan and build the years of our living. It is only the man of exceptional strength, working under the most favorable conditions, who may fashion life after the manner of his dreams. To one comes a vision of quiet days in the garden of the peaceful heart, and he finds himself thrown out into the struggling masses of humanity and is forced to fight at the cannon's mouth. Another, perchance, longs to conquer nations and build empires while life leaves him naught but the shade of silent forests, and his is to toil in the field. An artist becomes a clerk, the orator a farmer, the poet a preacher, and the spinner of fine-woven dreams, mayhap, a thief. The longing must of necessity burn with a mighty and fierce flame that wins for man his heart's desire.

When I think of François Villon, so great a dream-maker, so spendthrift of life, so much a reveler in the misery of human existence, I can-

not but believe that his mind reveals that which his unconquered hands deny: the impulses of goodness and manliness dwelling within the poet's heart. You know how this waggish old world of ours is always careful to give its men and women credit for all of the meanness they ever do; likewise it is as ever loath to grant an individual with weak tendencies any virtue for that which smacks of disinterested goodness. Therefore, in reviewing the life of this man long gone before our age, let us remember these things: Our knowledge of him is scant, only what he himself confesses; the courts, that not being their business, record not the grace o' God in his character, but only the evil; and the lack of having committed civil offense is small argument for the whiteness of any soul's page in the Book of Life. Because of these facts, pray let us welcome quite heartily the frankness, the sincerity and the evident truthfulness with which he lays bare his history.

There is no writer of good books who occupies a more sympathetic place in my heart than Robert Louis Stevenson. There is only one other, and he only in a certain mood, whom I love better to read. About his life I care not at all; but Stevenson, whose death was my first

knowledge of him, I think I know more intimately than many whose bread I have eaten and with whom I have dwelt. All of this to the end that I condemn not. It is merely a "human frailty witnessed by friendly eyes" when I say that in respect to Villon, Stevenson, at least this once, forgot. The hand that so wonderfully and so righteously defended Father Damien struck poor profligate Villon who was no other than Damien amid souls morally leprous. The difference was slight between the two, only the balance is in favor of Villon. The poet was born in his leper's colony, and in his youth was glad because his ignorance told him there was no other kind of people save his own.

"We poets in our youth begin in gladness,
But thereof comes in the end despondency and
madness."

Then, he doubtless was a leper before he knew of the existence of the soul's disease. And when he knew, he of the

"Poor splendid wings, so frayed and soiled and torn!" fought and struggled and died, even as Damien did, in the throes of conquering himself. Damien died of leprosy in Molokai; Villon died of leprosy in Paris. They were brothers.

It is only fair to remember, however, that at a later day Stevenson wrote this:

“I am tempted to regret that I ever wrote on this subject, not merely because the paper strikes me as too picturesque by half, but because I regarded Villon as a bad fellow. Others still think well of him, and can find beautiful and human traits where I saw nothing but artistic evil; and by the principle of the art, these should have written of the man, and not I. Where you see no good, silence is best. Though this penitence comes too late, it may be well, at least, to give it expression.”

François Montcorbier, *alias* François Villon *alias* François des Loges, as you please, was born presumably in Paris during the year 1431. We have the best of reasons to believe that he was born into poverty, doubtless in the very meanest part of the city. Of his parentage, he himself says,

“*Comme extraict que ie suis de fee,*”

This Mr. John Payne translates —

“As sure as I’m a fairy’s son,”

which serves the purpose well enough, considering the fact that we know little of his mother and less of his father. He attests in his *Greater*

Testament that he “is not an angel’s son,” and says,

“My sire is dead — God have his spright!
His body’s buried out of sight.”

His *Ballade that Villon made at the Request of his Mother, wherewithal to do her Homage to Our Lady*, bespeaks both his mother’s and his own piety. Those were the days you’ll remember, when, by the grace o’ the devil, a man could be a thief and at the same time a saint with sincerity toward his conscience. It was an age when religion consisted entirely of what a man believed, and not of the kindness of his hands, nor the honor of his heart. Louis XI, King of France, who was not a whit less a libertine and a rascal than this maker of *ballades*; Villon, who had he been born the monarch would have been far the better prince of the two; and the mother, whose true and gentle spirit caused the poet to think of “Our Lady;” . . . all received their faith and consolation from the same superstition. Their religion was a theory, and with them righteousness was an accident. So in labelling François a villain, I pray you count his religion number one.

By the goodness of Guillaume Villon, whose name Montcorbier afterward adopted, the youth

was taken to the Convent of Saint-Benoit-le-Betourne, near the Sorbonne. Here, in 1449, Villon became Bachelor of Arts, and in 1452, Master of Arts. These degrees signified that the bearer of them had about as much learning as a boy in the "Fifth Reader" in the mountains of Kentucky. The worst feature of this schooling was the riotous living of the students. The present system of hazing, Hallow-eve pranks, class-day scrimmages, and other mischief is merely Kindergarten love-pats compared with the "fun" of François Villon, student and rhymester. Here, while working to see how little work he would have to do to get his degree—a system still in vogue—he also received his education in the art of destroying property without a license; how to steal as an indication of good-fellowship; and how to defy and defeat the purposes of civil law. "They were always in open conflict with the civil authorities, thanks to the custom by which the university was a recognized law unto itself." All of this was for fun. College pranks run amuck. So, in passing judgement on the life of the Father of French poetry, remember that this is reason number two for his being a pickpocket and a murderer.

Reason number three let's leave to the lover of logic. I know of some good things the man accomplished.

He was sincere. Our churches, more's the pity, have at least a few who pray one day in the week and the rest of their time leave God out of their lives. Had Villon been wholly villain he would have worn a longer face ; laughed a deal less often among his comrades ; played less upon the follies of monks and nuns ; and doubtless to-day would have been counted very "respectable." His verse is his autobiography ; in it he catalogues the fact that he was a thief, a jail-bird, a murderer, and a libertine.

"Sinned have I oft, as well I know."

This, above, and such frankness as follows, bespeak him well :

"Flies in the milk I know full well ;
I know men by the clothes they wear ;
I know the walnut by the shell ;
I know the foul sky from the fair ;
I know the pear-tree by the pear ;
I know the worker from the drone ;
And eke the good wheat from the tare :
I know all save myself alone."

He was a patriot.

"For he deserves not any fortune fair
Who would wish ill unto the realm of France."

He was François of the big heart. Men loved him from the King of France, who frequently pardoned him from the gallows and from jail, to his comrades in misery and crime. Men do not love one another for nothing. A man must of necessity do things which smack of kindness and loyalty before he wins friends. “The best way to have a friend is to be one.” That he loved his mother and was kind, no one dares dispute. To Joan of Arc he pays this tribute :

“ and Joan the maid,
The good Lorrainer, the English bare
Captive to Rouen and burned her there.”

He was a lover. The very best thing that may happen to a man’s heart is to be a lover. “The young lady in question, whom Villon calls his rose, but whose name was Catherine de Vauclerc, is thought to have been a niece of Guillaume Villon, the canon of the Cathedral Church of Saint-Benoit, who took the boy under his protection, if not into his residence,—the Hôtel de la Porte Rouge, adjoining the Sorbonne.” This lady he accuses of his downfall, a weakness, I confess, but nevertheless true.

He was a poet. I think this is because he was also a lover. I may be wrong; he may have been a poet and consequently a lover. At any

rate I've a notion you must needs be the one or the other to be any good at either the making of love or the making of poesy. He was a poet; and to be a maker of dreams covers a multitude of sins. Because it was written by a thief makes this no less beautiful :

“Alas! for lovers pair by pair,
The wind has blown them all away:
The young and yare, the fond and fair;
Where are the snows of yesterday?”

The date of Villon's death is uncertain, and matters not at all. To say we owe him sympathy in his wretchedness; pity in his weakness; honor, in that he was anything at all; and love for his lyrics, is but to express the sheerest gratitude.



MY PHILOSOPHY

By EDWIN CARLILE LITSEY

Nor more, nor less, would I demand of Fate
Than strength to work, and health. I'll gladly wait

~The triumphs by the way. I'll count me bless'd
With bread and wine, friends, home—and painless rest.

*A BALLAD OF FRANCOIS VILLON**(Prince of all Ballad-Makers. *A Reprint from SWINBURNE*)

Bird of the bitter bright gray golden morn,
 Scarce risen upon the dusk of dolorous years,
 First of us all and sweetest singer born,
 Whose far shrill note the world of new men hears
 Cleave the cold shuddering shade as twilight clears;
 When song new-born put off the old world's attire
 And felt its tune on her changed lips expire,
 Writ foremost on the roll of them that came
 Fresh girt for service of the latter lyre,
 Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name !

Alas, the joy, the sorrow, and the scorn,
 That clothed thy life with hopes and sins and fears,
 And gave thee stones for bread and tares for corn
 And plume-plucked gaol-birds for thy starveling peers,
 Till death clipt close their flight with shameful shears ;
 Till shifts came short and loves were hard to hire,
 When lilt of song nor twitch of twangling wire
 Could buy thee bread or kisses ; when light fame
 Spurned like a ball and haled through brake and briar,
 Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name !

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn !
 Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick tears !
 Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,
 That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers,
 Like joy-bells crossed with death-bells in our ears !
 What far delight has cooled the fierce desire

* With acknowledgement to *The Poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne*.
 Harper & Brothers, New York, 1904.

That, like some ravenous bird, was strong to tire
 On that frail flesh and soul consumed with flame,
 But left more sweet than roses to respire,
 Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name?

ENVOI

Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire,
 A harlot was thy nurse, a God thy sire;
 Shame soiled thy song, and song assoiled thy shame.
 But from thy feet now death has washed the mire,
 Love reads out first at head of all our quire,
 Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name.

*FLAMINGOES*

By CLINTON SCOLLARD

O'er the undulant emerald reach of rushes,
 Where the waters of old Nilus pour,
 Tinted as with rosy sunrise flushes,
 Silent wing they toward the Libyan shore.

Types they are of mystery and wonder,
 As all else within this hoary land,—
 Pyramid and pylon rent asunder,
 And the tawny, ever-shifting sand.

Radiant, remote and sense-evading,
 They are like a dream o'er which we joyed,
 Flashing on the vision and then fading
 In the golden-blue Egyptian void.

*THE POETRY OF CLINTON SCOLLARD**By F. J. DICKS*

In a general way, poetry is the liberating of our conception of the Ideal through the medium of verse structure, and the Ideal is, as we know, impelled by that mysterious vital force, Imagination. If the Imagination is the creative power, it would appear that pessimism parading under the guise of poetry is either the offspring of a warped ideal or is not poetry. It seems to me that the latter is the logical view; for poems dealing with death and sadness are not necessarily pessimistic. By way of illustration take Browning's *Prospice*; there is certainly nothing bordering on morbidness in it—quite the contrary in fact.

One cannot read a volume of verse by Clinton Scollard and fail to see that it is the work of a literary artist and optimist, and that it possesses a peculiar richness which characterizes it as from the pen of a man of masterly imaginative powers—a poet. From his early *vers de Société*, to his later *Nature Poems*, there is that wonderful freshness of charm and clearness of outline which is so impressive, and which so few poets attain.

His first books show him to be a facile verse maker in those extremely difficult exotic forms that appear so simple, but are truly pitfalls, a fact to which many a young poet can testify. Speaking of his first efforts I cannot forbear mentioning what is to me one of the most exquisite lyrics penned by any of the modern poets: I allude to his *Rose Leaves* appearing in *With Reed and Lyre* (1886). The thought embodied is simple but it is handled with a definite skill and force that reminds one of the effectiveness of simplicity employed by the famous Elizabethan lyrists. The influence of Dobson and Locker is easily discernable in *Pictures in Song* (1884) and also in *With Reed and Lyre* (1886); but one must not underestimate the value of workmanship displayed by the younger poet, for the resemblances are of a general and not a special character. It is obvious that in all set forms of verse there must be immediate coincidences of structure, language and thought; so when I say that the younger poet was influenced by acknowledged masters, Dobson and Locker, I do not mean it in the sense of direct appropriation, but rather of sympathetic treatment.

But Mr. Scollard is at his best when with Theocritus he sings,

“Begin, dear muse, begin the Woodland song,” for then he is truly himself, unaffected, life-like, and charming. He has succeeded so well that the cool and quiet of the woodland seem to wrap the reader in their wholesome sweetness. It is not only in his portraiture of the forest that he has developed so rich a power, but the subtle fragrance of the wind, the soft sobbing of the rain, and all the allurements of *Arcady* lend themselves at his gentle bidding.

The optimistic note running through all his poems is significant, for it denotes a freshness of feeling and a joy in life; and feeling is essential in truly artistic work. That Mr. Scollard has this there can be no doubt, for one has but to turn to his latest volume, *Easter Song* (1906), and read *I Lean Sunward All the Year* to be convinced of this :

“I lean sunward all the year,
Copses green or copses sere,
Time of rose or time of rime
Tree-toad chirp or cricket-time!

I lean sunward: in my veins,
Ichor runs and ardor reigns,
Lifting me, upon my course
Towards light’s elemental source.

I lean sunward: may there be
 Something that shall buoyance me
 When life's varied course be run
 To the Light behind the sun!"

Does it not seem that the flowers must always be in bloom and the skies blue for the man who "leans sunward all the year?" Of the perfection of his metre, his power of expression and his conscientious execution there is no need to speak—it suffices to say that there are very few imperfections—but rather let us be thankful that his poetry is delightful, and not consider the why!



*THE BALLAD OF DEAD LADIES**

By FRANCOIS VILLON, 1450

Tell me now in what hidden way is
 Lady Flora the lovely Roman?
 Where's Hipparchia, and where is Thais,
 Neither of them the fairer woman?
 Where is Echo, beheld of no man,
 Only heard on river and mere,—
 She whose beauty was more than human? . . .
 But where are the snows of yester-year?

* A reprint from D. G. Rossetti's Collected Works. London: Ellis & Elvey. 1901.

Where's Héloise, the learned nun,
For whose sake Abeillard, I ween,
Lost manhood and put priesthood on?
(From Love he won such dule and teen!)
And where, I pray you, is the Queen
Who willed that Buridan should steer
Sowed in a sack's mouth down the Seine? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

White Queen Blanche, like a queen of lilies,
With a voice like any mermaiden,—
Bertha Broadfoot, Beatrice, Alice,
And Ermengarde the lady of Maine,—
And that good Joan whom Englishmen
At Rouen doomed and burned her there,—
Mother of God, where are they then? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Save with thus much for an overword,—
But where are the snows of yester-year?

OF STUDIES

Reprint from FRANCIS BACON (1561-1626)

Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment and disposition of business; for expert men can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels and the plots and marshalling of affairs come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament is affectation; to make judgement wholly by their rules is the humour of a scholar; they perfect nature and are perfected by experience—for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning by study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience. Crafty men contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to

weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books; else distilled books are, like common distilled waters, flashy things. Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man: and, therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not.

About Our Contributors

Estelle Duclo: *vide THE PATHFINDER*, Vol. I, No. 0.

Frank Waller Allen: *vide THE PATHFINDER*, Vol. I, No. 5.

Clinton Scollard: *vide THE PATHFINDER*, Vol. I, No. 1.

Edwin Carlile Litsey: *vide THE PATHFINDER*, Vol. I, No. 5.

Francis J. Dicks lives in St. Louis, Mo.

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COLLEGE FRIENDSHIPS



THESE verses were written by President CHARLES CUTHBERT HALL, and read at the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Delta Psi Fraternity at Williams College.

They express the faith, held by many in common with the author, in the continuity beyond the years of the real friendship of souls. The message will be a stimulus and consolation to all to whom it comes.

As a piece of bookmaking, the volume is the best that has come from *The Sewanee Press*. The type used is the beautiful Caslon, and the paper is "Arches" French handmade. It was dampened before printing and the sheets were afterwards smoothed in the dry-press. There is a touch of antique red on the title-page and the colophon is likewise rubricated. Otherwise the volume is without decoration, making its appeal through its dignified simplicity.

The entire edition consists of only 180 copies. Of these, ten copies will be bound in full levant with silk ends, stamped in gold; the remaining 180 copies will be bound in limp leather. The special copies will be sold for \$10 each, and the others at \$2 each.

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